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THE DESCENDANTS OF THE LAST EARLS OF DESMOND.

The question has been often asked, who are the present representatives of the Geraldines of Desmond? The Knight of Glyn, and the Knight of Kerry, and the Fitzgibbons of Munster, may be considered at present as the only representatives, in a sort of way, of this great race; being descended from three legitimate sons of the celebrated John Fitzgerald, of Callan, who was slain by the MacCarthys, in 1261. This John of Callan left one legitimate son, Maurice, the ancestor of the Earls of Desmond, and three illegitimate sons, who became the founders of several respectable families in Munster, viz.; 1. Maurice, by the wife of O'Kennedy, the ancestor of the Knight of Kerry; 2. Gilbert, or Gibbon, by the wife of O'Coinin, ancestor of the White Knight, and of Fitz-Gibbon of Ardskea and Kilmore; and 3. John More, surnamed *na-Sursainne* [of the Surcingle] by the wife of O'Collins, chief of Hy-Connell Gaura, ancestor of the Knight of Glyn, and also of the Fitzgeralds of Clonlish, Finiterstown, and Ballinard, in the county of Limerick, and of the Fitzgeralds of Ballinphoill, and Moinhotry, in the Decies, in the present county of Waterford.

It has been also often asked whether any of the descendants of the last Earl of Desmond are yet extant? It has been universally acknowledged by our genealogists that his male descendants are long extinct, though some of his female descendants may still be extant; but none of them has taken the trouble, so far as I know, to trace this descent. The following pages are devoted to this inquiry; and the writer will feel thankful to any reader who will be kind enough to point out any error in what he advances, or who can throw additional light on a subject which must be now considered as of much curiosity, if not of historic interest.

Gerald, the sixteenth and last Earl of Desmond, who forfeited the largest estate that any individual in Ireland ever possessed, married Eleanor, daughter of Edmund, Lord Dunboyne; by whom he had one son, James, who died in the Tower of London; and two daughters; 1. Catherine, who married Sir Daniel O'Brien, first Viscount of Clare, third son of Conor, third Earl of Thomond; and 2. Ellen, who married Sir Valentine Browne, ancestor of Lord Kenmare.

John Fitzgerald, the nephew of the unfortunate Desmond, retired to Spain in the year 1603, where he was known as the Conde de Desmond. He died at Barcelona, leaving by his wife, the daughter of Richard Comerford, of Danganmore in the county of Kilkenny, an only son. Dr. Daniel O'Daly, the historian of the Geraldines, who was an attached adherent of his family, and who had attained to an eminent position in the church in Spain, speaks of his brief career as follows:—"This loved youth, created Count at my instance, did not tarry long in the land of Spain. The scanty pension allowed him by the King was not commensurate with the dignity and rank which belonged to the heir of

Desmond. In fact, he saw that many Irish, then at the King's court, were preferred to him ; and these were men who could not dare to compare with the Geraldine in his own country. Wherefore, choosing rather to trust to fortune, he abruptly left Spain, and, taking service in his Cæsarian Majesty's army [that of the Emperor of Germany] served him well and chivalrously for three years. But at last, when he had the command of a strong town, then besieged, he was called on to surrender. This he refused, choosing rather to die of starvation than betray his trust."

This Gerald, Conde de Desmond, died without leaving any issue, and in him ended the male representation of a line of nobles who, since the extinction of the Earldom of Ulster, were certainly the most powerful in Ireland, and who had bravely supported their sovereigns in their wars in France and the Holy Land.

On the death of Gerald, son of John, Conde de Desmond, the representation of the Earls of Desmond reverted to the descendants in the female line of Gerald, the sixteenth Earl. His eldest daughter, Catherinc, married Sir Daniel O'Brien, afterwards Viscount Clare. A younger daughter married Sir Valentine Browne, founder of the family of the Earl of Kenmare. The Viscounts Clare accordingly became the representatives of the Fitzgeralds of Desmond, on the extinction of the male issue of John, Conde de Desmond, by the decease of his son, Gerald, as already mentioned. Conor O'Brien, second Viscount Clare, had, besides his son Daniel, third Viscount Clare, two daughters, who left issue, viz., Helena the elder, who married Captain Roger O'Shaughnessy, of Gort, in the county of Galway, and Elizabeth, who married the Knight of Kerry.

Daniel, third Viscount Clare, was a zealous adherent of the kings of the Stuart race, and particularly of King James II., whose cavalry he commanded at the battle of the Boyne; and throughout a long military career gave the highest proof of ability, as well as of fidelity to the three kings of England, whose favour he enjoyed. He went abroad with his regiment after the Treaty of Limerick, and became Colonel of one of the proprietary regiments in the French service, his own corps of cavalry being constituted one, the command of which was always to continue in his descendants.

The Viscounts Clare, who, as has been shown, represented the great house of the Fitzgeralds of Desmond, after the decease of Gerald, Conde de Desmond, continued in the Roman Catholic faith, remaining steadfast to the political as well as religious principles of their progenitors, both paternal and maternal. Charles, the sixth Viscount Clare, (by courtesy,) commanded the Irish regiments in the French service, at Fontenoy and other places, where they maintained their military character in a manner too well known to require special mention here. He frequently visited his cousin, the Earl of Thomond, in England, after the peace of Utrecht, [1713,] and was presented by him to King George I., who made him an offer that the estates of his family and his dignity should be restored, if he would become a member of the Established Church of England. He, nevertheless, refused; and, on the death of Henry, eighth Earl of Thomond, his landed property went to the next in legal succession, who were Protestants. The eighth Earl of Thomond, however, (to his great honour be it mentioned,) left him a legacy of twenty thousand pounds.

The history of the two families of Thomond and Desmond may well induce a doubt of the correctness of a saying attributed to Lord Burleigh, that "nobility is nothing but ancient riches." Never, probably, did blood and lineage more assert their influence and exhibit their force than in these two races of O'Brien and Fitzgerald. The sympathy felt for them in foreign countries is strikingly instanced by the course pursued by Louis XIV. On the death of Charles, the fifth Viscount Clare, (who died at Brussels of wounds received in the battle of Ramilies, A.D. 1706, his son, being still very young,) the preservation of the colonelcy of the proprietary Regiment of Clare was due to the interposition of the French king, who did not wish to let it pass from a family that had abandoned all but their *honour* and their *swords* for the cause to which they had adhered. His Majesty, therefore, reserved a right of succession for the young Lord Charles O'Brien; and, in the meantime, appointed as its Lieutenant-Colonel, Morogh O'Brien, to command by brevet; in consideration of his paying to the young Viscount Clare, every year, six thousand livres, out of the emoluments attached to his post.

Time at length demonstrated that the unfortunate estrangement of the Irish Roman Catholics, both at home and abroad, from the British crown, crippled the strength of the empire; and the pressure of circumstances necessitated the adoption of a conciliatory policy. By slow degrees the principle of civil and religious liberty asserted its influence; and, in proportion to its growth, was the increase of the good sense and of the practical charity that has since resulted from toleration throughout Christendom.

In the year 1774, Charles O'Brien, known as seventh Viscount Clare, died without issue; and the representation of this family, as well as of the sixteenth Earl of Desmond and third Earl of Thomond, devolved heraldically in Ireland on the descendants of Captain Roger O'Shaughnessy; that is to say, the representation did so, of the families of which these noblemen were the heads. The sixth Viscount Clare, however, left a representative in France, through the female line,—the Duc de Choisoul, Preslin, being descended from him.

Captain Roger O'Shaughnessy left an only son, William, who served with distinction in the French army, though not possessing a proprietary regiment like his uncle Daniel, third Viscount Clare. He commenced his military career in 1689, as captain of one hundred men for King James II., in Ireland; and went to France in 1690, in O'Brien's regiment, belonging to the brigade commanded by Lord Mountcashel. He served through the various great campaigns of Louis XIV., in Germany, Italy, and Flanders; and died at Gravelines, in January 1744, having attained the rank of Major-General, or Marechal de Camp. On his death, his only sister, Helena, became the representative of the family; but their great estate of Gort had been confiscated, in consequence of the part taken by Captain Roger O'Shaughnessy in upholding King James II.

Captain Roger O'Shaughnessy was eldest son of Sir Dermot O'Shaughnessy, who possessed Gort as a fee held by knight's service, as his ancestors had done from the time of King Henry VIII; when Dermot O'Shaughnessy, then the head of his family, or captain of his nation, surrendered the

lands which had belonged to his progenitors from time immemorial, and received a grant of the same from the English crown, by knight's service, together with the honour of knighthood. Sir Dermot's successors, thus being all deemed knights of Gort until the time of the last Sir Dermot, were styled accordingly; but Sir Dermot forfeited his lands on account of his adherence to the cause of Charles I. and Charles II., and received only a portion of them back, in consideration of his loyalty and merits, (under a special clause in the Act of Settlement,) to be held by the modern tenure of Common Socage: his son, Roger, therefore, was never considered to have borne the honour of knighthood.

The family of O'Shaughnessy descended from Dathi, the last pagan monarch of Ireland, (said to have been killed by lightning at the foot of the Alps,) was so celebrated for dignity, integrity, and high bearing, that De Burgo, in his *Hibernia Dominicana*, was induced to say of them "cujus nobilitatem, antiquitatem, et integritatem qui non novit, Hiberniam non novit!" Sir Dermot O'Shaughnessy, the father of Captain Roger, was distinguished for his attachment to the house of Stuart, and took a leading part among the Confederate Catholics of Kilkenny. Helena Ny-Shaughnessy, who, as has been already observed, became the representative of the family, on the death of her brother William, in 1744, married Theobald Butler, and was the mother of Francis, John, and Theobald Butler, living in 1784, and great-grandmother of the Right Honourable James Fitzgerald, who was born in 1742, and died 20th January, 1835, at the advanced age of 93 years. Mr. Fitzgerald was thus lineally descended in the seventh degree from Gerald, sixteenth Earl of Desmond. Gylles Ny-Shaughnessy, the aunt of this Helena, married Daniel O'Donovan, of Castledonovan, in the county of Cork, chief of his name; and from her the present O'Donovan (Morgan William, son of Morgan of Mountpellier, near Cork) is descended, in the sixth generation.

Mr. Fitzgerald had two grand-uncles in the army of James II.; viz., Colonel Nicholas Fitzgerald, and Robert Fitzgerald, who was comptroller of the Musters, as was his ancestor in the fourth degree, Captain Roger O'Shaughnessy.

Mr. Fitzgerald was paternally descended from David Fitzgerald, or Fitzgibbon, commonly called the "White Knight," feudal Lord of Kilmore, in the county of Cork, who became the eldest male representative of the descendants of Gibbon or Gilbert Fitzgerald, who was styled "the White Knight." On the decease of Edmund Fitzgibbon, the "White Knight," who first (as appears from the pedigree of his family, in Lambeth Palace) assumed the name of Fitzgibbon, instead of Fitzgerald, A.D. 1607, his estates devolved on his daughter, who married the celebrated Irish Chief Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Fenton, from which marriage is descended the Earl of Kingston. Edmund Fitzgibbon, the "White Knight" already mentioned, was enabled to arrange with the English government, as one of the conditions of his betraying the Earl of Desmond, that he should not only preserve his landed property, but should transmit it to his daughter, contrary to the usual rules of descent of Knight's Fees in Ireland, which would have given it to David Fitzgibbon, of Kilmore, commonly called *ne Carrig*, (i.e., David of the Rock.) It must be observed, however, that, if the

fief of the White Knight had been allowed to descend, according to the common course of law, to his cousin, David *ne Carrig*, it would have been confiscated; as the estate actually possessed by the latter was, in consequence of participation in the rebellion of Gerald, sixteenth Earl of Desmond, in the year 1585.

In Ireland, at an early period, those who possessed knight's fees were called knights, and often took the name of the land they held by military service. Thus, the first Knight of Kerry was the son of the father of the first Earl of Desmond, and appears to have been so called from his fief being in the county of Kerry; while his descendants still continue to enjoy the same honorary distinction. The Knight of Glyn was another son of the same chieftain; and was so denominated on account of his land being a well-known valley called Glencorbry, now Glyn, in the county of Limerick, which has remained in the possession of his posterity. The White Knight was senior to the latter; and all three were the illegitimate sons of the same father, John of Callan, according to several Irish MSS., which are corroborated by a genealogy in the Carew collection at Lambeth, compiled by order of government, on the termination of the civil wars in Munster, with a view evidently to making arrangements as to the property which had been forfeited.

The White Knight possessed a very large estate in the counties of Limerick and Cork, which, at a comparatively recent period, was declared by Mr. Arthur Young to be the finest estate in Europe. The White Knight was not, however, called after his land, but is supposed to have taken his distinctive appellation from the colour of his armour. The family of the White Knight was always esteemed the second branch of the great southern house of the Geraldines, of which the Earl of Desmond was the head. There was likewise a Fitzgibbon, a Knight of Ardskea; and another, Knight of Clonlish, [*Ridire na Claenghlaise*] who seems to be the same as the old Knight.

It has been already stated that the descendants of Sir Dermot O'Shaughnessy (knighted by King Henry VIII., in 1553,) continued to be recognised as knights until their tenure *per servitium militare* came to an end, in the time of Cromwell; restitution being made to them after the Restoration of Charles II., in Common Socage.

In Scotland, likewise, persons are frequently spoken of as "knights" of certain places, because they held by military service.

At the time of the visit of his Majesty King George IV. to Ireland, in 1821, the claim of the Earl of Kingston, to be allowed a place on public occasions, as "the White Knight," in company with the Knight of Kerry, was successfully opposed by Mr. William Vesey Fitzgerald, (afterwards Lord Fitzgerald of Desmond, and of Clangibbon,) eldest son of the Right Honourable James Fitzgerald.

The Right Honourable James Fitzgerald was younger grandson of Mr. James Fitzgerald, whose two brothers already mentioned were present at the Battle of the Boyne. On the decease, in 1852, of Major William Edmund Fitzgerald, of Drumbighill, in the county of Clare, without issue, Mr. Fitzgerald's son, Henry, third Lord Fitzgerald, and Vescei, became the eldest male representative of

that race of the Geraldines, "commonly called the White Knights," (to use the expression recorded on the tomb of their house, in the Abbey of Kilmallock,) and of the family of Fitzgibbon or Clangibbon.

Mr. Fitzgerald naturally entertained a strong feeling in reference to the losses sustained by his ancestors and relatives during the civil wars; the forfeiture of Gerald, sixteenth Earl of Desmond, having been larger than of any other individual; and the property which was confiscated, that had belonged to the branch of the White Knight's family from which he was descended, as well as to the O'Shaughnessys and others with whom he was connected, being likewise of vast extent. He always kept up close relations with the Roman Catholic body in Ireland, and at an early period devoted his efforts to the advancement of civil and religious liberty. He was also strongly attached to the cause of Irish nationality, and took a decided part in favour of the Declaration of Independence in 1782, and was one of those who succeeded in carrying it in the Irish House of Commons. From that period, until the Legislative Union with Great Britain was proposed, he continued to fill high official positions; but, deeming that measure inconsistent with the interests of Ireland, he resigned office, considering that "the post of honour was a private station," when political turpitude prevailed to the extent it then did, overbearing all opposition.

Mr. Fitzgerald having inherited considerable wealth from his maternal grandfather, Pierce Lynch, Esq., and being in possession of large private fortune from various sources, a peerage was pressed upon his acceptance as an inducement to support the Union; but he never thought proper to receive this mark of distinction.

Mr. Fitzgerald married Catherine, eldest daughter of the Rev. Henry Vesey, Warden of Galway, and co-heiress of her brother, Mr. John Vesey, of Oranmore, in the county of Galway, who died A.D. 1770. This lady was descended from the family of which Viscount De Vesey is the head; and derived extensive property in the county of Galway from her great-grandfather, the Most Reverend John Vesey, Archbishop of Tuam, a zealous adherent and personal friend of King William III., during part of whose reign he acted as one of the Lords Justices of Ireland. In 1815 her two sons, in conformity with the Will of their uncle, Mr. John Vesey, assumed by sign manual the name and arms of Vesey, in addition to that of Fitzgerald; and she was created a peeress of the kingdom of Ireland, A.D. 1826, by the title of Baroness Fitzgerald and Vesey.

Her eldest son, Mr. William Vesey Fitzgerald, was returned to parliament soon after the Union, for Ennis, in the county of Clare, a borough in which his father possessed political influence. He subsequently represented the county of Clare, and became a member of the Duke of Wellington's Cabinet, in the year 1828. Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald had long been one of the most efficient of the parliamentary friends of the Roman Catholics.

When the late celebrated O'Connell declared his intention of coming forward himself as a candidate, in opposition to Mr. Fitzgerald's re-election, asserting that he could take his seat in the House of Commons, though a Roman Catholic, under the then existing law; and a contest ensued, which terminated in the return of Mr. O'Connell, by an overwhelming majority; accusations were made

against Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald of luke-warmness or hostility to the cause of the Roman Catholics. Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald, however, subsequently again represented Ennis, and on his mother's death succeeded to her Peerage. In A.D. 1835, he was created a Peer of the United Kingdom, by the title of Lord Fitzgerald of Desmond, and of Clangibbon, in the county of Cork. In A.D. 1841, he became President of the Board of Control, in Sir Robert Peel's Cabinet, his health having compelled him to abstain from proceeding as Governor-General to India soon after the formation of that administration, and died May 11th, 1843, unmarried.

He was succeeded in his Irish Peerage by his brother Henry, third Lord Fitzgerald and Vesey, the present Peer, who is likewise the Very Rev. the Dean of Kilmore.

We have thus traced, through various channels, down to the present day, the representatives of Gerald the sixteenth Earl of Desmond, and found the race to have been uniformly talented, generous, and noble-hearted. It will afford us much gratification if any correspondent will point out others of the same illustrious blood.

JOHN O'DONOVAN.

SUBTERRANEAN CHAMBERS AT CONNOR, COUNTY OF ANTRIM.

Some engineering operations in the neighbourhood of Kells and Connor, in this county (about four miles from Ballymena), lately brought under my observation a series of very remarkable caves, which, so far as I am aware, have not hitherto been noticed. They are situated close to the present church of Connor, part of them being covered by the burying-ground; and a local tradition affirms that a passage proceeds from one of them directly under the church itself. One cave is divided from the rest by the intervening river; but it is believed by the people on the spot that a passage exists under the bed of the stream connecting it with those on the opposite side.

The whole of these caves are evidently artificial, being built of large undressed stones, without any kind of mortar or cement. The walls are corbelled in to support the roof, which is, in all cases, composed of large flattish stones. The depth of soil, at present covering the top of the caves, varies from four to fifteen feet. The accompanying plan, which was carefully made on the spot, gives a correct idea of their arrangement and connection with each other, so far as the inquiry has yet been pursued. It is not improbable that other similar chambers may exist in their immediate vicinity.

The first cave into which we entered (marked A on the plan) was about 18 feet long by 5 feet wide, narrowing towards one end next the passage leading into it—a circumstance observed in all the caves we examined. This chamber was very wet, from the copious dropping of moisture from the roof; but the others were quite dry. The passage leading to it had been opened some years